

Title: Policy capture process

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Document aims

To brief the INB on current activity to capture policy. To recommend a process regarding future policy formation and use of an evidence informed approach.

Need for policy capture

At a time when PFEW is looking to be increasingly open and transparent in its day-to-day business an up-to-date record of policy decisions and underpinning procedures would provide a way to demonstrate this. It would allow the organisation to be seen to be working in a clear and democratic way and would provide useful information to both the membership as well as other bodies who work alongside the Federation. It would facilitate consistency.

Some research has been undertaken to look at the policies and procedures of a range of different organisations in order to establish some consistent principles and examples of good practice across the public sector.

What is policy?

Policies are usually statements of a belief or intent of an organisation on those key issues affecting it or its membership. Policies can help implement an organisation's core principles, mission statement, aims and objectives. Policies should be made democratically, they should be clear, concise and widely available; and they may well be time-limited. Procedures sit underneath broader policy decisions and show the ways in which policies are to be implemented.

Setting policy

Many organisations have a clearly defined structure for setting and reviewing policy on a regular basis. For example, the Scottish TUC sets out on its website that their policy framework is set by their Annual Congress, which is attended by delegates from affiliated trade unions and trades union

councils, each April. The Congress then elects a General Council to oversee policy development and implementation throughout the year, with the support of an appointed Secretariat.

The PFEW Independent Review sets out a decision making structure for the PFEW, which states that the National Board makes policy decisions, with National Council consultation.

Review / refresh of policy

It is key that policies are easy to understand and readily available to members. For example, the University College London Union details when the policy was passed and when it lapses in order to ensure they are continually reviewed and refreshed. This is a clear benchmark against which the activities of the organisation can be measured. See <http://uclu.org/policy>

Likewise Surrey Police policies are subject to regular reviews and are amended or deleted accordingly. This can be found at: <http://www.surrey.police.uk/about-us/our-policies-and-procedures#sthash.SrgRLYv2.dpuf>

Implementing policy decisions

Once a policy framework has been set, it is usually the role of an executive committee to oversee the implementation of such policy. This may involve formalising policy statements and procedures to show how a particular policy will be implemented or it could relate to the instigation of campaigns to raise awareness of an issue or issues. It could well be the case that policy statements and procedures have an agreed layout and structure in order to maintain a consistent approach. Again, the implementation of policy statements and procedures can clearly demonstrate how the organisation's objectives are being met.

Future policy making and best practice in the process of policy making: Evidence Informed Approach to Policy

There is a clear trend towards the use of an evidence based approach in policy making, especially with regard to policies on pay, and conditions of service. (This is sometimes also referred to Evidence Based Management). This is an attempt to pull research findings through to practical policy. It is intended to ensure that practitioners are supported in their work by the evidence: it does not mean that all policy has to be set in accordance with evidence, but simply that there is a clear process for its consideration in a systematic way.

There are four key components.

1. The research evidence base. What is proven to work. (E.g. for talent management programmes such as Fast Track and Direct Entry).
2. The specific organisational context. Organisational specific issues may mean that what works elsewhere doesn't work in the organisation in question. (E.g. for the police, will Direct Entry / Fast Track type talent management programmes work, or will the culture and ways of gaining operational experience mitigate against?) Context also includes the legal, social, political, and economic context.
3. The views of those affected. Usually judged by surveys / focus groups.
4. Management / practitioner (Fed Rep / Council / Board) judgement.

If an Evidence Informed approach to policy making were to be adopted this would provide a clear auditable trail for the policy formation process. It provides an organisation with a knowledge-based approach to any decision making which would give representatives a level of confidence in the approach they take. It would provide a structured process with clarity of roles for the Board and Council, and a clear trail as to how decisions were reached. This could be supported by the Research and Policy Support team, under the direction of the Board, with the Board.

Scope of PFEW policy

The Research and Policy Support team have begun the capture of existing policy. This is currently placed on the Hub. Policy is captured under the following headings:

- Operational policing
- Crime and criminal justice
- Professional Development and Integrity
- Organisational Development

The Operational Policing category is almost complete, with 19 of 21 policies captured.

Process for policy capture

The Research and Policy Support team have begun a project to capture existing policy across these topics, and others. We have:

1. Drawn on existing sources – eg the website, PNB / PAB discussions where appropriate, professional committee notes, and so on. This to be kept as simple and high level as possible / appropriate, to keep fit for purpose. Clearly some policies will be overarching.
2. Validated our first draft policy capture with some Council members.

With regard to formulation of future policy, and revision of existing, it is suggested that consideration be given to the adoption of an Evidence Informed approach, especially where there are likely to be significant impacts for members.

Content and structure

All policy documents will follow the same structure.

- (1) A policy statement
- (2) Responsibility (INB)
- (3) Summary
- (4) Procedure / implementation (and responsibility)
- (5) Record of creation and review
- (6) Sign off

Process for policy capture

Step 1:

Anyone or any subcommittee wishing to recommend a new policy should raise this with the General Secretary. There should be a discussion regarding formulation, including whether there is a justification or requirement, or whether existing overarching policy suffices.

Step 2:

If it is agreed that a new policy is needed, then a decision will be taken as to what level of resource will be allocated: ie will extra research data be required; when will the policy be drafted and by whom; when will this be discussed with the INC and INB.

Step 3:

The draft will be created by either the person raising the policy, or the Senior Policy Officers in the Research and Policy Support team. All documents must be sent to the Senior Policy Officers, and will be checked for consistency with other policy documents, and any additional information to be supplied.

There is a distinction between policy and procedures. It is for the INB to set policy, but responsibility for implementation of policy may be delegated (e.g. to the General Secretary, to subcommittees, or to others as appropriate).

Step 4 - sign off:

The General Secretary and Chairman will sign off all policies that are ratified by the INB, on behalf of the INB.